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UNCLAS VILNIUS 000162

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/NB AND CA/VO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [PREL](#) [LH](#)

SUBJECT: VISA WAIVER PROGRAM: LITHUANIA PREFERS
CONSULTATIONS TO FORMAL ROADMAP

REFS: A. STATE 26010

[1](#)B. VILNIUS 139

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On February 17, Charge discussed with MFA representatives Lithuania's progress in conforming to Visa Waiver Program (VWP) regulations as part of a "roadmap" initiative (ref A). He cautioned that accession to VWP would likely not occur in the immediate future. GOL representatives said that they prefer a process of action-oriented consultations rather than a formal, high-level roadmap agreement. They specifically expressed interest in arranging a visit for GOL consular officials to the United States for consultations on biometric security features and to observe "customer service" elements of USG consular training. The GOL understands that VWP accession will be a slow process, and wants to avoid raising public expectations at this time. We intend to continue work with the GOL on a substance-focused agenda. A visit by Lithuanian consular officials to the United States would maintain the positive momentum in our bilateral consular relationship that originated from Assistant Secretary Harty's visit (ref B).
END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Charge and conoff met with Sarunas Adomavicius, MFA Undersecretary, and Vaidotas Verba, Director of the MFA's Consular Department, on February 17 to discuss Lithuanian efforts to meet the legislative requirements for possible entry into the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) (ref A). Charge communicated USG willingness to offer the GOL a roadmap of reciprocal steps along the lines of the Polish agreement. He cautioned that legislative requirements for the VWP would not change, however, and that the country's relatively high refusal rate suggests that Lithuania will not manage to join the VWP in the immediate future.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Adomavicius and Verba emphasized that the GOL does not want to push the issue at the "political level" for fear of unnecessarily raising domestic expectations. Verba said that he would therefore like to avoid a "formal" roadmap agreement, which, he opined, could not include a timetable, and instead continue a process of consultations. The GOL, they suggested, could then keep the public informed of ongoing progress, perhaps with a substantive statement timed for the Secretary's prospective visit to Vilnius in April.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Both interlocutors stressed the GOL's willingness to increase cooperative efforts with the USG to help accelerate Lithuania's accession to the VWP. Verba confirmed GOL interest in sending consular officials to the United States for consultations on biometric security features and to observe "customer service" elements of USG consular training. Charge pledged to help arrange such a visit, and Verba said he would present a detailed proposal in the coming weeks.

[1](#)5. (SBU) COMMENT: The GOL, at least the MFA, is hesitant to pursue formal, high-level discussions on the VWP. Lithuanian officials understand that VWP accession will not come immediately, and therefore do not want to raise public expectations. Instead, they hope to make substantive, working-level progress on consular issues to pave the way for VWP accession as soon as possible. We will continue to work with the GOL to help it meet all the technical requirements for the VWP and encourage the proper use of U.S. visas by its citizens. We believe a visit by Lithuanian consular officials as envisioned by Verba is good way to launch the results-oriented consular dialogue that A/S Harty emphasized during her visit to Vilnius last month. We will help arrange the trip as soon as possible.
Mull